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ABSTRACT

Communication scholars traditionally have assumed that children have only limited exposure to politically relevant information. This study attempts to assess the validity of this assumption by comparing the content of two sources generally available to United States school children: The "Weekly Reader" and television news. For two ten-week periods, the fourth-grade, fifth-grade, and sixth-grade editions of the "Weekly Reader" were analyzed for content. Each article was coded separately for such dimensions as length of item, number of accompanying photographs, and subject. Concurrently, abstracts of network television news broadcasts were analyzed for content, with broadcast time substituted for column inches as the indicator of story emphasis. Variations between the manifest content of the "Reader" and the content of television news can be attributed to both audience and institutional differences. Generally, findings indicate that the primary value of the "Reader" is as a classroom heuristic--its value as a source of news and political information is minimal. (KS)

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THE CONTENT OF CHILDREN'S NEWS SOURCES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY READER AND TELEVISION NEWS

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THE CONTENT OF CHILDREN'S NEWS SOURCES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY READER AND TELEVISION NEWS*

For nearly twenty years political and other social scientists have explored the concept of political socialization.[1] However, the search for an understanding of the political socialization process too often has been constrained (by design or otherwise) to the broad Lasswellian question of who learns what from whom under what circumstances and with what effect. Empirical political socialization inquiry has thus been guided to a research emphasis on interpersonal agents of socialization. In large part, research has suggested that two agents of socialization--the family[2] and the school[3]--dominate childhood political socialization[4] while considering two other interpersonal variables--peer interaction[5] and personal experience--to play a major role in the ongoing political socialization of adults.[6]

In recent years, communication scholars have begun to consider the role of the mass media in the political socialization process of children.[7] But more often than not, the media have been largely ignored because of their perceived role as only reinforcing agents. To some extent, this perception is rooted in an implicit assumption that children have only limited exposure to politically relevant information. However, no one has yet to explore this assumption. This study attempts to empirically assess the validity of this assumption by comparing the content of two news media generally available to U.S. school children, the Weekly Reader and television news.

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The extent to which media socialization variables have been ignored has recently been explored by Kraus and Davis.[8] Indeed, even within the context of other agents, the media's role in the socialization processes are not often considered. Television, for example, beyond providing express images of law enforcers and political figures or even general images of power relationships in society through dramatic programming, provides hard data on the political world in the form of news. Even if the news itself were of little relevance to a politically maturing child, it often provides a stimulus for dinnertime discussion of political issues, concepts, or personalities.[9] Therefore, beyond whatever role the news media play in setting the adult agenda,[10] they also play a role as a source of information in the news flow from parents to children.

In the schools, classroom media have occasionally been studied, primary emphasis has been on the role of teachers, the curricula (rather than the content of the curricula), or the role-imitation politics of the classroom (student government, class elections, and so forth). School children, however, are exposed to more information than this, particularly from textual material. Yet, only one major study exists documenting this content in political terms. A content analysis by Edgar Litt[11] showed certain themes such as the "participation ethic" and the "democratic creed" to be emphasized by social studies textbooks. Countless other studies by local schoolboards, although less scientific, have shown textbooks to be culturally biased, rarely featuring minority characters, infrequently showing women professionals, and generally supportive of middle class life styles.

In general, these findings fail to breathe life into the issue of educational systems as agents of stability or change. For the most part, political values of preceeding generations are inculcated into succeeding ones, and the stability of the political order persits. In part, there is more continuity than change because discussion of politics-like religion-is largely taboo in the classroom. This is not to argue, of course, that political events go unnoticed in the classroom. Certainly they are discussed. But the significance of those events, partisan perspectives, and evaluative judgments of those events are ignored. In short, school politics is non-controversial, or to put it another way, politics is non-political.

If the classroom were the only source of political information, the notion of non-controversial politics would dominate the political socialization on experiences of school children. However, as noted earlier, alternative sources exist. Formal education is only a portion of the wider political learning experience. Children are not isolated from controversy, for they have access, even before attaining newspaper literacy, to television news. The questions then arise as to whether or not non-classroom sources of political news are indeed used by children, and to what extent they effect their political learning.

The questions of the influence of various sources of information on the political socialization of children becomes even more complicated when the non-text and non-teacher sources of political information are considered. Indeed, as in the adult world, media such as newspapers and television are appropriate for presenting current affairs.

Instructional television in the elementary school classrooms focusing on political affairs has been quite limited, but within American schools, a widely used medium is the weekly current events magazine, Weekly Reader and its imitators. Each week during the academic year, the Weekly Reader is published and distributed nationally in several editions (News Parade for the fourth grade, Eye for the fifth grade and Senior for the sixth grade, among others). The magazine contains news features from a variety of fields, edited for compatibility with reading levels. Although somewhat less structured than adult news weeklies such as Time and Newsweek, many of the same general topics such as political news and recent events in sports, movies, the sciences and so forth are covered. Supplemental classroom materials such as the Weekly Reader, despite the fact that they are nationally distributed and widely used (a combined circulation of over eleven million copies weekly) have not been analyzed anywhere by educators, political scientists or communication scholars even though they may serve as an important source of socio-political information available to children.

The absence of such analysis has left even those socialization scholars who have considered mass media variables to ignore or minimize the role of such news magazines in the political socialization process as providers of information about the political world. For scholars concerned with the impact of television news on political socialization,[12] this research gap has made it impossible to assess the relative impact of classroom news magazines compared to non-classroom sources of political information such as television news. With the hope of providing empirical foundations for others to explore this gap, a detailed analysis of the manifest content of the Weekly Reader was initiated.

Knowledge of the content of the Weekly Reader alone, of course, would be insufficient to permit scholars to draw any inferences about its capability to provide political information to children compared to other news sources. Ample evidence suggesting that television is the primary source of political information among adults[13] is likely to be true for children as well for several reasons. It can be argued at the outset that a substantial number of households watch television news during the dinner hour, making it impossible for the child to avoid contact with that news medium. Secondly, children have a generally positive orientation toward television as the medium which brings them their daily entertainment. Finally, the limited literacy of young schoolchildren does not make newspapers viable as alternative sources of information at home. Therefore, a second medium, television news, was also selected for analysis to determine the role of each source as a provider of information from which children draw political knowledge, or to ascertain the extent of information redundancy to which the children might be exposed.

This report deals only with the manifest content of the two news sources. Elsewhere, the question of the use to which the information gathered from contending media sources of information is put is explored in detail.[14]

Method

For two ten week periods in Fall, 1973 and Spring, 1974, the fourth, fifth and sixth grade editions of the Weekly Reader, (to which all of the students interviewed for a large political socialization research project subscribed) were content analyzed.[15] Each article was coded separately across various dimensions such as length of the item, number of accompanying photographs, and other dimensions, particularly the subject of the article. A maximum of three

subject themes per article were coded, although a majority of articles (56% for the fourth grade, 62% for the fifth and 51% in the sixth) had only one theme emphasized in each story. Themes divided basically into political issue themes, items describing scientific progress, and items related to recreational activities. Over sixty issue themes were found across the three editions.

Concurrently, the abstracts of the network television news broadcasts were content analyzed along the same dimensions as the Weekly Reader, only with broadcast time substituted for column inches as the indicator of story emphasis.[16] By summing the items, the most widely reported news themes could be identified. One purpose of the television news analysis was to determine the extent of overlap with the Weekly Reader so that those issues emphasized in both media couldbe isolated from those in only one medium. Through this technique, the independent contributions of the two media to the political awareness of interview respondents would be identifiable.[17]

During the content analysis period, two measures of emphasis were taken. The first was the number of times an issue or subject appeared in an edition of the Weekly Reader. Secondly, the number of column inches devoted to a discussion of the issue was encoded. As several content analysts have found, these two measures are highly correlated, suggesting that the analysis of content emphasized proceeds equally well with only a single measure.[18] For the Weekly Readers sampled, the product moment correlation between the number of column inches devoted to the issue and the number of items was +.93 for the fourth grade, and +.92 for the fifth and sixth grade editions. The following data are based on the use of column inches as the indicator;

were the number of items used instead, similar results would have been generated.

Results

The basic reporting parameters of the Weekly Reader are found in Table 1. It can be seen that the fourth grade edition differs

Table 1 about here

notably from the fifth and sixth grade editions in terms of both the number of stories and the number of issues mentioned in each weekly magazine. The number of issues mentioned and the length of each story increases monotonically across grade levels, suggesting that the older students are not only exposed to a greater variety of news items, but lengthier and more multidimensional discussions as well. The greater gap between the fourth and fifth grades ($p < .001$) than between the fifth and sixth grades (n.s.) in terms of the number of stories and issues mentioned per week can be somewhat deceiving, for despite the greater number of issues and stories in grade five compared to grade four, the number of issues mentioned per story is the same in both the fourth and fifth grade editions (1.4 issues per story). Thus, while the number of issues is increasing, the complexity of the discussions of those issues does not increase until the sixth grade. Nevertheless, the greater number of stories and issues mentioned in the upper grades reflects the view that older children can manage a greater diversity and quantity of information.

The seven topics garnering the most broadcast time on the network news are presented in Table 2. All the topics are political, divided

Table 2 about here

between foreign and domestic news, and vary across the two time frames.[19] Only two of the issues (Watergate during the Fall time period for the sixth grade and the energy crisis for all three grades during the Spring time frame) overlap with the top ten Weekly Reader issues (see Table 3). Other issues such as impeachment or the economy and inflation are reported from time to time in the Weekly Reader, but are not generally among the top twenty most reported Weekly Reader items. Although the finding may be unique to the unusual number of highly important news events during the content analysis period, there was a considerable degree of stability in the list of important news items between the two time periods. Watergate, the Middle East conflict, and the enduring energy crisis provided much of the news common to both time periods.

Employing column inches as the indicator of emphasis, Table 3 presents the ten most emphasized subjects across each grade during the two content analysis periods. A quick glance at the table immediately reveals that most

Table 3 about here

of the issues emphasized in the Weekly Reader could not be classified as hard news (i.e. they are not dependent on fast-breaking, rapidly changing events in the political environment), particularly for the fourth and fifth grade

editions. Moreover, there appears to be a division between those issues emanating from the adult world, and those from the child's world.

At the very least, the absence of hard news suggests that the Weekly Reader cannot be considered a news magazine because the nature of the material presented has little need to be rapidly disseminated. Of course, it may be the case that the primary function of a weekly classroom supplement such as the Weekly Reader is to acquaint the student with the concept of a periodical which reports on a variety of news events as do the Weekly Reader's adult counterparts. This, however, by no means suggests that the Weekly Reader is without value, for as Hess and Torney suggest, imitation of the adult world can be an important aspect of political socialization experiences.[20]

The topics emphasized in the Weekly Reader suggest that it is news independent. The extent to which this is true can be tested, for if the concern of the Weekly Reader was to disseminate adult world information, a high correlation across grades (within the same time frame) would be expected, although the story sophistication or detail would vary across grades.

Within grades, there is a considerable variation in the correlations of issues emphasized across time frames. In the fourth grade, the cross time Pearsonian correlation across all issues for which items appeared was +.83, while for the fifth grade it was +.63 and for the sixth grade, +.54. In the fourth grade, there is consistent reporting overtime, while for the other grades, less consistent reporting. Apparently, reporting becomes more issue and more news-dependent in the higher grade levels. The turn-

over of issues in the sixth grade is consistent with the fact that of the top twenty issues in the sixth grade over both time periods,ten can be considered as hard, adult world, timely issues which change over time, compared to only eight of twenty in the fifth grade and four of twenty in the fourth grade. Thus, the information to which the oldest children are exposed in the Weekly Reader is considerably more worldly than the information for the youngest children.

Although it appears as if this news content would contradict an impression from Table 3 that even the sixth grade edition has a large number of child's world story types such as animal life, sports,'U.F.O's (unidentified flying objects) and new inventions, these dominate only the top ten issues and are followed by a variety of news issues which round out the top twenty. In the fourth grade, children's issues continue to dominate all issue reporting; indeed of 43 possible adult issue categories, there were reports in the sixth grade edition covering 41 over the two time frames, 33 covering the fifth grade edition, and only 21 covering the fourth grade. This supports the earlier contention that the higher the grade level, the greater the exposure to adult issues, i.e. sixth grade students have far greater access to adult information than students in the fourth grade.

Looking at each grade separately in Table 3, it can be seen that items from the child's world dominate, particularly in the youngest grades. In the sixth grade, adult issues such as minority affairs, Watergate, farm and agricultural policy and the energy crisis dominate. However, even the leading adult world issues to which the sixth grade children are exposed

can hardly be considered as current events news issues. Events such as minority affairs or ecology, for example, can be considered long standing issues with which not only adults but children have had experience over the years. 11

A further demonstration of how independent the Weekly Reader is of current events and news can be seen by looking at the synchronic across-grade differences in rank order correlations of issue reporting. Because of the different formats and pages per issue across grades, rank order correlations appearing in Table 4 were computed for these comparisons.

Table 4 about here

It can be seen in Table 4 that during the first time period, there is a moderate correlation between the issues emphasized in the various grades. Only three issues during Fall 1973 and five issues during Spring 1974 were major topics for all three grades. A stronger relationship appears during the second analysis period, boosted in part by the universal reporting of the energy crisis and related issues. These cross-grade correlations suggest again that there is little news content in the Weekly Reader given that they are drawing on the same universe of political news. This finding is underscored by the fact that the correlations are computed over the whole time period and not on a week to week basis. Thus, any differences which could have arisen from different news deadlines or greater editorial time required to simplify news to a fourth grade reading level were minimized. The fact that within-grade diachronic correlations are greater than across-grade synchronic correlations reinforces further the notion that the Weekly Reader is new independent.

Summary Conclusions and Policy Alternatives

The difference between the manifest content of the Weekly Reader and of television news can be attributed to both institutional and audience differences. Network news editors consider the nightly news as essentially a headline service presenting the equivalent of the front page of a prestige newspaper, but presenting it on a more superficial level which makes it attractive to non-newspaper readers. Time constraints prohibit the wholesale presentation of soft news and features.

The Weekly Reader has very different goals. Despite its claim that it is a weekly news magazine, its primary value is as a classroom heuristic. It has been demonstrated above that the possible contribution of the Weekly Reader as a source providing news and political information for young school children is minimal. Earlier it was suggested that the concept of a weekly supplement to daily news was the lesson to be learned from the Weekly Reader. Alternatively, although there is little discussion of the functions or uses of classroom news weeklies in education journals, the Weekly Reader may serve to stimulate discussion or teacher instruction of political issues. But clearly the Weekly Reader serves as a non-controversial facilitator; indeed it appears as if the editors will go to some lengths to avoid political controversy. As an example, it is interesting to note in Table 3 that in the fourth grade edition, ecology, which had been one of the most strongly emphasized issues during the first time period, was absent from the list during the second analysis period. It was replaced by the energy crisis, an issue which can be viewed as controversial with respect to its impact on ecological and environmental issues.

Undoubtedly, the Weekly Reader and similar magazines must have entertainment valued to attract the child's interest, but they could be more reflective of the important issues of the day. Perhaps a somewhat greater effort can be made to present issues and events in a way that will make them interesting to the student rather than focusing simply on those often obscure "news" topics that are believed to be inherently attractive to a child's interest.

Of course, the value of current events education itself is a question that educational policy makers must determine. By definition, current events have a short educational life. Yet, the concept guiding current events lessons seems to be that of enhancing political awareness and not necessarily substantive knowledge of given issues. If this is the case -- and if the purpose is also to encourage children to use non-textbook learning tools--then the Weekly Reader serves a useful function. But, if the intent behind a weekly news magazine is also to familiarize students with the adult political world, then the content analysis has shown that the Weekly Reader fails.

To solve the problem of informing school children of current events, it could be required that children view television news at home. But the cooperation of parents as well as children would be required, and would further raise the issue of political teaching in schools. Problems such as the proximity of the news to the dinner hour, established viewing habits, and competition for the use of the set in single-set households would prevent this alternative. Moreover, the sophistication and attention span of younger students might be taxed.

One solution might be the introduction of video-taped newscasts into the classroom. Given the success of television as an instructional medium in a variety of settings, regular newscasts (in light of the CBS-Vanderbilt Television Archives settment) or specially produced children's news such as the Saturday morning "In the News" program could be presented in the classroom. Such presentations could serve as springboards for class discussions of the news, enhancing not only substantive knowledge, but the process of political discussion as well. Relying only on supplementary materials as the Weekly Reader potentially has long range political consequences.

If the Weekly Reader is neither controversial nor news laden, what then is its contribution to the development of political awareness? Undoubtedly, such topics as disasters and scientific inventions are topics critical to the adult world, but they hardly are marked by the degree of controversy which surround other, more political issues. Presumably, it can be argued that the absence of controversy is dysfunctional to political understanding because it ignores a critical dimension of adult politics--conflict--in favor of consensus issues. Although the problems inherent in this consensus approach generated by the Weekly Reader go beyond the scope of concerns of the present research, its significance and possible links to discontinuities with other aspects of political socialization and with general political naivete ought not be overlooked.

Notes

1. Periodically, major literature reviews emerge. See Herbert Hyman, Political Socialization (New York: Free Press, 1959); Jack Dennis, A Survey and Bibliography of Contemporary Research on Political Learning and Socialization (Occasional Paper No. 8) (Madison: Center for Cognitive Learning, University of Wisconsin, 1967); David O. Sears, "Political Socialization," in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (eds.), Handbook of Political Science (Miscropolitical Theory, Volume 2) (Reading, Mass: Addison Wesely, 1975) pp. 93-153; Sidney Kraus and Dennis Davis, The Effects of Mass Communication on Political Behavior (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976) and Richard E. Dawson, Kenneth Prewitt and Karen Dawson, Political Socialization (2nd Edition) (Boston: Little Brown, 1977).

2. Major studies of the family include James C. Davies, "The Family's Role in Political Socialization," The Annals 361 (1965), pp. 10-19; Frank A. Pinner, "Parental Overprotection and Political Distrust," The Annals 361 (1965), pp. 58-70; M. Kent Jennings and Kenneth P. Langton, "Mothers versus Father: The Formation of Political Orientations Among Young Americans," Journal of Politics 31 (1969), pp. 329-358; M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, "The Transmission of Political Values from Parent to Child." American Political Science Review 62 (1969), pp. 169-184; M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, "The Division of Political Labor Between Mothers and Fathers," American Political Science Review 65 (1971), pp. 69-82; Robert William Connell, "Political Socialization in the American Family: The Evidence Re-examined," Public Opinion Quarterly 36 (1972), pp. 323-33; and M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, The Political Character of Adolescence (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

3. Studies of the role of the school include M. Levin, "Social Climates and Political Socialization," Public Opinion Quarterly 25 (1961), pp. 596-606; David Ziblatt, "High School Extracurricular Activities and Political Socialization," The Annals 361 (1965), pp. 20-31; Robert D. Hess and Judith V. Torney, The Development of Political Attitudes in Children (Chicago: Aldine, 1967); Kenneth P. Langton and M. Kent Jennings, "Political Socialization and the High School Civics Curriculum in the United States," American Political Science Review, 62 (1968) pp. 852-867; Richard Merelman, Political Socialization and Educational Climates: A Study of Two School Districts (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971): and Jennings and Niemi, The Political Character...op. cit.

4. Among the more general works on children and the political system are Fred I. Greenstein, Children and Politics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965) and David Easton and Jack Dennis, Children and the Political System (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969).

5. The role played by peers has not been studied to the same extent as other agents, but some discussion of their role appears in Dawson et al., op. cit. See also Herbert McClosky and Harold E. Dahlgren, "Primary Group Influence on Party Loyalty," American Political Science Review 53 (1959), pp. 757-776; and Kenneth P. Langton, "Peer Group and School and the Political Socialization Process," American Political Science Review 61 (1967), pp. 751-758.

6. Empirical studies on the political socialization of adults are few. For an interesting theoretical discussion, see Orville Brim and Stanton Wheeler, Socialization After Childhood (New York: John Wiley, 1966).

7. Recent media studies include Gary C. Byrne, "Mass Media and Political Socialization of Children and Pre-Adults," Journalism Quarterly, 46 (1969), pp. 140-142, Steven H. Chaffee, L. Scott Ward and Leonard P. Tipton, "Mass Communication and Political Socialization," Journalism Quarterly 47 (1970), pp. 647-666; Neil Hollander, "Adolescents and the War: Sources of Socialization," Journalism Quarterly 48 (1971) pp. 472-479; Joseph R. Dominick, "Television and Political Socialization," Educational Broadcasting Review, 6 (1972), pp. 48-57; William G. Cushing and James B. Lemert, "Has TV Altered Students' News Preferences?" Journalism Quarterly, 50 (1973) pp. 138-141; and Norris R. Johnson, "Television and Politicization: A Test of Competing Models," Journalism Quarterly 50 (1973), pp 447-455, 474.

8. Kraus and Davis, op. cit.

9. Recent data suggest that indeed many children do watch network television news. Meadow et al. report on a sample of 354 fourth, fifth and sixth grade children wherein 17.2% reported almost always watching network television 43.3% reported occasionally, and 39.5% reported almost never watching the network news. See Robert G. Meadow, Fraid Lavipour and Gerald T. West, Home-School Differences in Political Learning: Television's impact upon School Children's Perceptions of National Needs (National Institute of Education Project Number 3-2406, 1974). Beyond exposure to network news, of course, there may be exposure to local news programming, which with its jocular format, may prove even more appealing to children.

10. See in particular the work of Jack McLeod and Maxwell E. McCombs, most notably Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function

of Mass Media," Public Opinion Quarterly 36 (1972), pp. 176-187; and Jack M. McLeod, Lee B. Becker and James E. Byrnes, "Another Look at the Agenda Setting Function of the Press," Communication Research 1 (1974), pp. 131-166. Also, see Kenneth Prewitt, "Some Doubts About Political Socialization Research," Comparative Education Review 19 (1975), pp. 105-114.

11. Edgar Litt, "Civic Education, Community Norms and Political Indoctrination," American Sociological Review 28 (1963), pp 69-75.

12. See in particular Kollander, op. cit.; Dominick, op. cit,; Cushing and Lemert, op. cit.; and Johnson, op. cit.

13. The Roper Organization, What People Think of Television and Other Mass Media: 1959-1972 (New York: Television Information Office, 1973).

14. Meadow et al., op. cit.; and Robert G. Meadow, "Political Maturity and Agenda Selection," (Unpublished paper, 1976).

15. Intracoder reliability (Holsti formula for percentage of agreement) was .94. See Ole R. Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1969).

16. For a sample page of a news abstract, see Television News Abstracts and Index published monthly by the Joint University Libraries of Vanderbilt University.

17. Meadow, op. cit.

18. This point has been demonstrated by Robert G. Meadow, "Issue Emphasis and Public Opinion: The Media During the 1972 Presidential Campaign," American Politics Quarterly 4 (1976), pp. 177-192; and Robert S. Frank, Message Dimension of Television News (Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath, 1973).

19. Only the top seven items were chosen because of the techniques employed in the survey phase of this research reported elsewhere. The purpose of the content analysis of television, of course, was not to provide a detailed news analysis. Such analyses can be found in Frank, op. cit. and Neal E. Cutler, Albert S. Tedesco and Robert S. Frank, The Differential Encoding of Political Images (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1972).

20. Hess and Torney, op. cit.

Grade	Number of Stories Per Week	Issues Mentioned Per Week	Story Length
4	8.4	12.3	6.1"
5	13.7	19.4	6.2"
6	14.3	22.6	7.0"

Table 1

Reporting Dimensions of the Weekly Reader

Fall 1973	Spring 1974
Middle East War	Energy Crisis
Watergate	Watergate
Economy/Inflation	Middle East War
Crime and Terrorism	Impeachment
Energy Crisis	State Department/Kissinger
Chinese/Soviet Affairs	Labor News
European Affairs	Crime and Terrorism

Table 2 Issues Emphasized on Network News

Fall, 1973

Fourth Grade	Fifth Grade	Sixth Grade
Scientific Inventions	Animal Life	Animal Life
Youth Activities	Sports	Minority Affairs
Sports	Youth Activities	Ecology
Animal Life	Disasters	Watergate
Ecology	Ecology	Hobbies
Science-General	Women's Achievements	Disasters
Art and Music	Transportation	Women's Achievements
Entertainment	Farming/Agriculture	Farming/Agriculture
Farming/Agriculture	Science-General	Sports
Amusements/Recreation	Amusements/Recreation	Economy/Inflation

Spring, 1974

Animal Life	Science-Inventions	Energy Crisis
Science-Inventions	Sports	Animal Life
Sports	Energy Crisis	Ecology
Science-General	Youth Activities	Sports
Youth Activities	Ecology	Space-U.F.O's
Energy Crisis	Animal Life	Art and Music
Fads	Women's Achievements	Science-Inventions
Transportation	Transportation	Transportation
Occupations	Science-General	Crime
Art and Music	Art and Music	Economy/Inflation

Table 3 Issues Emphasized in the Weekly Reader

	Fall 1973		Spring 1974	
Grade	5	6	5	6
4	.38*	.39	.64	.51
5		.43		.53

*All correlations in table $p < .001$

Table 4 Rank Order Correlations of Issue Reporting Across Grades